

Histoplasmosis

What is histoplasmosis?

Histoplasmosis is a fungus infection that affects the lungs and may occasionally invade other parts of the body. It is an uncommon disease with fewer than 12 cases reported in upstate New York each year.

Who gets histoplasmosis?

Anyone can get histoplasmosis. It is recognized more often in immunocompromised individuals, such as AIDS patients. Birds (especially chickens), bats, dogs, cats, rats, skunks, opossum, foxes and other animals can get histoplasmosis and may play a role in spreading the disease.

How is histoplasmosis spread?

The disease is acquired by inhaling the spore stage of the fungus. Outbreaks may occur in groups with common exposures to bird or bat droppings or recently disturbed, contaminated soil found in chicken coops, caves, etc. Person-to-person spread of histoplasmosis does not occur.

What are the symptoms of histoplasmosis?

Symptoms vary from mild to severe, ranging from flu-like illness to serious lung infection.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms may appear within five to 18 days (usually 10 days) after exposure. However, most people do not experience symptoms.

Does past infection with histoplasmosis make a person immune?

Infection usually results in increased resistance to infection, although the immunity is not complete.

What is the treatment for histoplasmosis?

Specific medications such as amphotericin B are available.

What can be done to prevent the spread of histoplasmosis?

Minimize exposure to dust in contaminated and enclosed environments such as chicken coops and their surrounding soil. Use of a protective mask and spraying the area with water may be helpful in minimizing exposure to dust.

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